

# JESKYNsnews

**October 2006**

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## **Work begins.**

The last year of consultation and planning has been a hugely positive process in defining what Jeskyns will be to local people and we now look forward to rolling up our sleeves and getting started.

Works are planned to begin in early October and will happen in three key phases:

### **Phase One**

The heavy engineering works, such as creating the car park and ponds should take place Oct/Nov/Dec 2006. However, due to the nature of the works being undertaken during the winter months, this work may get delayed into the new year.

### **Phase Two**

The lighter engineering work is dependent upon the first phase, but is anticipated to take place Jan/Feb/Mar 2007. This will include placing of signage, interpretation and seating.

### **Phase Three**

The tree, shrub and hedge planting will take place

early in the New Year, ideally around Jan/Feb 2007 (while the trees remain dormant).

As we progress with the project, we will update the timescales on our website and post information notices around site. Much of this work will require large machinery and equipment and therefore during these works, we would ask that everyone follows the signage and barriers and remain on approved paths for their own Health and Safety.

As always, contact me (Denise) on the details below if you have any queries about these works.

## **Daisy, daisy.....**

**Our wildflower meadow, sown last year, has been a sight for sore eyes over the summer. It has been alive with butterflies and all sorts of insects and birds too.**



During the consultation period, many people stated that they loved the newly planted wildflower meadow just south of Ashenbank Wood and would like to see similar areas elsewhere at Jeskyns. We will therefore be creating many other areas of wildflowers and species rich grassland. We hope this picture gives people a taste of things to come as over the next few years we transform Jeskyns into a stunning site for people to enjoy and in which wildlife will be able to thrive.

**For more information please contact:**

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## What a load of rubbish!

Many of you will know that Jeskyns is home to two large chalk pits, which have been filled with rubbish over a number of years.

They were so large and so full up that it was impossible to tell exactly what was in them, however one thing for sure was that they were a real blot on the landscape, loved only by the thriving rat population which inhabited them!



*Above: one of the pits before the clearance works*

Because of the unknown contents of these pits, measures had to be put in place to protect against the risk of land pollution and therefore in depth consultation with the Environment Agency was required before the clearance contractors could start work. Once they started it soon became apparent that there was all manner of things contained within the pits. Whole cars, farm machinery, asbestos sheeting and washing machines were just some of the items found during the clearance works!

Land Clean Ltd contract manager Keith Rogers said:

*“You can never be sure what you might uncover on a job like this. Local residents have spoken about the possible presence of a World War 2 bomb, but thankfully we never came across one!”*

Interestingly some huge old tree trunks were one of the more useful items found during the works. We will be carefully re-positioning these to help create new habitat areas, as many insect species rely upon dead and decaying wood for food and shelter.



*Above: The same pit after it had been cleared*

We hope you will agree from looking at the “after” picture that all the hard work was worth it. The two pits which previously provided a stark reminder of how we as humans can sometimes abuse the environment are now an attractive feature of the landscape and no longer present a hazard to people, wildlife or the land.

## Kent Goes Wild!

August saw the arrival of a special event at Shorne Wood Country Park. The second annual wildlife recording event, Kent Goes Wild, was host to thirty different local and national organisations all with one aim: to introduce members of the public to the diversity of wildlife occurring in Kent.



*Above: visitors were challenged to “Name that tree” at the Forestry Commission stand.*

Visitors enjoyed a wide variety of activities including the Forestry Commission’s “Name that Tree!” competition. Well done to Ashleigh McDonald, Sophie Rolfe and Victoria Gunn who were the lucky competition winners.

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## So much to explore...

Many of you will have already seen the fantastic new visitor centre at Shorne Wood Country Park, but have you had a look at the displays in it?

If you do, you will see information about how six special sites in the north Kent area are working closely together to provide high quality, accessible open space and countryside for everyone to enjoy.

These sites are: Shorne Wood Country Park, Ranscombe Farm Reserve, Ashenbank Wood, Cobham Park, Cobham Wood and of course Jeskyns. By working closely together, we hope to improve the links between our sites making them accessible to as many people as possible.



*Above: information panel displayed in Shorne Wood Visitor Centre showing the location of the six sites*

One of the ways that we hope to do this is to produce some "joint interpretation" of our sites. This could include creating a clearly mapped out, on the ground trail and information leaflet to show visitors how they can get from one site to another. It could even include an audio trail or education pack to encourage schools to visit the sites for learning opportunities.

If you would like to find out more about this interpretation project, or have ideas, which you think should be included, then please contact me, Denise, on the details at the bottom of this page. We would love to have the input of the local community

In the meantime, if you have not already done so, why not get out and visit some of these sites? There is so much to explore in the north Kent area.

## A step back in time...

The Jeskyns Community Greenspace Project is the next phase in a landscape history stretching back thousands of years.

As part of the project we have undertaken a number of activities to try to piece together the full story of this historic landscape. These have included documentary research, archaeological field walking and surface collection, geophysical prospection (called "Geofizz" on the Time Team programme!) and archaeological assessment trenching.



*Above: Crispin Jarman from the Canterbury Archaeological Trust led the archaeological investigations.*

The field walking found flints from around 4,000 years ago as well as fragments of Roman pottery. The geophysical survey and assessment trenches have identified an enclosure from around 1,800 years ago (the Romano-British period) and fragments of pits and ditches scattered across the site. Crispin Jarman of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust said:

*"This project has provided a great opportunity to examine a sizeable piece of land, understand its evolution and secure the long term conservation of important features"*

We are now identifying opportunities for involving more people in exploring and understanding the story of Jeskyns. Watch this space!

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## Get involved!

**Over the next year we hope to organise lots of on-site activities to encourage local people to get involved in the Jeskyns project.**

So if you fancy getting muddy whilst planting trees, trying your hand at a bit of archaeological investigation or you just want to be kept informed of what's happening, then give me, Denise, a call on the number at the foot of this page. I will add your details to our distribution list to ensure that you are one of the first to hear about what's happening.



*Above: why not get involved and get active like these Forestry Commission volunteers?*

## What is the Jeskyns project?

**We in the Jeskyns project team sometime forget that not everyone knows who we are or what this exciting project is all about. If you are one of those people who have just picked up this newsletter and are wondering exactly what it is all about, then this section should explain!**

The Forestry Commission was set up more than eighty years ago. Our mission is to protect and expand Britain's forests and woodlands and to increase their value to society and the environment.

Jeskyns is a 370 acre (150 hectare) site situated in the borough of Gravesham, just south of the A2 and to the north east of Cobham village.

In April 2005, with funding provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (previously the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), we purchased Jeskyns Farm with a view to transforming it into a community greenspace and woodland for the benefit of people and wildlife.

During the autumn and winter of 2005/06, extensive consultation was undertaken to find out what sorts of features the community would like to see on site.



*Above: a view of Jeskyns showing one of only three mature trees still in existence on site.*

As a result of this consultation and the completion of an Environmental Impact Assessment, we now have a site design which we hope to start turning into a reality on site over the next 6 – 9 months.

The proposed design includes mixed woodland, areas of wildflowers, grassland and hay meadows and even a traditional Kentish orchard. We will be creating a network of trails and paths across the site making Jeskyns accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. We plan to be able to welcome visitors in spring 2007.



*Above: map showing the location of Jeskyns.*



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